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ABSTRACT

Positing that an optimal way to make expectations and reality match may lie in helping university faculty learn about cultural traits and perceptions of their foreign students, a study used G. Hofstede's dimensions of national culture to assess cross-cultural differences in classroom interaction. The research sample was formed by 2 subsamples: 15 Brazilian graduate students and 15 American graduate students attending Penn State University. It was expected that culture background would influence an individual's style of interaction when relating both to classmates and instructors. The assessment of differences in students' perceptions was made by comparing the two groups of students. Except for Hofstede's individualism-collectivism dimension, results indicated that these two groups did not differ significantly. These results contribute to intercultural communication theory and communication education theory. It can help in providing cultural sensitivity and awareness of American educators and teaching assistants regarding behaviors of their students from collectivistic or low context cultures. (Contains 4 tables of data, questionnaire interview sample, and 21 references.) (Author/NKA)

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CULTURAL BACKGROUND AND CLASSROOM INTERACTION: PERCEPTIONS FROM AMERICAN AND BRAZILIAN STUDENTS

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Abstract:

An optimal way to make expectations and reality match may lie in helping faculty to learn about cultural traits and perceptions of their foreign students. Hofstede's dimensions of national culture was used to assess cross-cultural differences in classroom interaction. It was expected that culture background would influence an individual's style of interaction when relating both to classmates and instructors. The assessment of differences in students' perceptions was made by comparing American and Brazilian graduate students. Except for the individualism-collectivism dimension, results indicate that these two groups do not differ significantly. Implications of this difference for classroom interaction is discussed.

Cultural background certainly affects attitudes, beliefs and values about education, ideas about how classes ought to be conducted, how students and teachers ought to interact, and what kinds of relationships are appropriate for students and instructors. Judgments about appropriateness of behavior, and effective interaction between all parts involved will certainly occur. Cross-cultural interaction in the educational setting is growing. Developed countries such as the United States and a few countries in Europe receive graduate foreign students in an increasing number every year, both from developed and underdeveloped countries.

As of 1988 there were 350,000 international students studying in the United States (DeArmond, 1988). Non-native professionals and students are expected to adapt to a relatively new socio-cultural environment in both corporate and educational settings. Graduate American students and instructors face increasing contact with people from other cultural backgrounds who came to the U.S. to pursue their graduate degrees. In addition to international students the number of American minority students is also increasing. Collier & Powell (1990), citing the Chronicle of Higher Education (March, 1988), report that (between 1976 and 1986), the number of minority students enrolled in colleges and universities increased by 33 percent. Considering the growing multicultural climate in U.S. universities, the purpose of this study was to assess differences in perceptions about communication behavior in classroom interaction, based on cultural dissimilarities.

Conceptual and theoretical background

Cultures are formed through shared systems of symbols, meanings, and norms that are transmitted from one generation to another. Under the rules/systems theoretical approach, culture is best analyzed through identification of such systems of symbols, meanings and norms (Collier, 1986). Groups of persons who share a cultural background may also share systems of symbols in use and in perceptions of competent behaviors which are rule conforming and result

in positive outcomes (Collier, 1986). Perceptions of appropriate and effective behavior patterns vary across ethnic and cultural groups. Negative results generally occur as consequence of incompetent behavior in cross-cultural interaction; lowered self-esteem, lack of goal accomplishment, defensiveness about cultural identity, and little desire for a relationship to escalate. Cultural competencies are standards for appropriate and effective behavior shared by a particular ethnic or cultural group. Intercultural competencies are ideas about behaving in a mutually appropriate and effective way for two or more persons' cultural identities. To create intercultural competencies, a set of rules and preferred outcomes is negotiated during the course of conversation or relationship (Collier, 1988).

The objective of this study is to examine the classroom system. Accordingly, this paper focuses on perceptions and behavior in classroom interaction. The characteristics of student-instructor and student-student relationships on American campuses vary somewhat, depending on whether the students involved are graduate students or undergraduates, and depending on the size and nature of the school. Generally, graduate students have more intense relationships with their professors than undergraduates. At smaller universities the student-teacher relationships are typically more informal than they are in larger schools (Althen, 1988).

Student-teacher relationships in the U.S. are more informal than in certain Latin American countries, tending to be a more equalitarian status, especially in graduate programs. As Andersen and Powel (1991) point out, an American teacher may consider knowledge more relative or even negotiable, and strategies are used to evoke classroom interaction rather than compliance. Status differences in the U.S. can be noted, but it seems that differentiation is made in subtle ways, such as in tone of voice, vocabulary and title usages. American teachers normally expect students to raise questions and challenge what they have said. Teachers in the U.S. do not generally assume they know everything about a determined subject. Students who want more details or clarification about a subject are expected to raise their questions in the classroom, just after class ends, or in the teacher's office hours. It is also interesting to notice that in most universities, questions about grades are unwelcome for American professors. They normally

consider that they have a pattern system for determining grades, and, unless a mistake has occurred, teachers in the U.S. respond negatively to students who try to talk them into raising a grade. It should be added in this context that foreign students, especially those from countries where negotiating is a habit, severely damage their reputation in teachers' eyes by trying to bargain for better grades (Althen, 1988).

Any foreign student coming to an American university must undergo a process of acculturation in order to be effective in the classroom and in order to function well in that culture (Pialorsi, 1984). Acculturation, according to Young Kim (1991) is an adaptation process which occurs through the identification and the internationalization of the significant symbols of the host society. Since in this study the subjects have already been enrolled in a U.S. university for more than a semester, acculturation is a control variable. In this study there is a need to control such a variable to avoid the possibility that it may interfere or cause "noise".

After developing an awareness of cultural differences and universals, the foreign student should become acquainted with conflicts within a given culture. The conflicting values of competition and cooperation are obvious in American classrooms, especially concerning test grades, lab report scores, and cheating (Pialorsi, 1984). Pialorsi also adds that in classroom interactions American students have been told over and over to be punctual or to be quiet when the teacher is talking. Since they were children, American students have been asked to raise their hands to communicate when they want to speak or to answer questions. In college classrooms, although the lecture format is common, there is a tendency for an interactive dialogue between students and professors, either during or after a professor's presentation. In the university classroom in the U.S., the professor wields more power than the typical high school teacher because there is more at stake professionally and financially. The academic records will be part of the academic history that will affect their future professional careers. Professors in a multicultural classroom should recognize that students' educational backgrounds are in some ways much different from the classroom of homogeneous students. A multicultural classroom

demands that instructors be more conscious of and sensitive to the heterogeneous expectations and behaviors that students bring to the university classroom.

Cultural styles of thinking and perception play a role in the classroom system as well. Stewart and Bennet (1991) affirm that Americans anticipate future problems by searching for a single factor with which to explain events. This requires abstract thought, null logic, and an agent of causality. Stewart and Bennet (1991) explain that in the American culture, emotions have no overt role in thinking and that the analytical style of thinking may appear cold and impersonal to people of other cultures. In contrast, Brazilians are more synthetic or holistic than analytical in their thinking style (Harrison, 1983) and to them a holistic style seems more humanistic.

Stewart and Bennett (1991) further mention that the educational and social institutions that Americans create match the analytical conceptual style of thinking of American people. The curricula, pedagogy, and discipline in the schools provide unfavorable environments for relational and holistic conceptual styles. This condition may cause difficulties for many foreign students in higher education. Assessment of their development and performance may be misinterpreted because they don't function according to the American standard.

Hall (1988) identified and defined cultures in two broad categories: low context and high context. In a low context culture, such as in the United States (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Chua 1988), communication message is in the explicit code, in the verbal message. Conversely, in a high context culture like Brazil (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Chua, 1988), information is either internalized in the person or in the physical context. These characteristics also reflect the communication style in the classroom. The issue of context culture will affect other people's ways of dealing with space (territoriality and personal space) and time orientations.

Also, examining how culture influences our worldview, Hofstede (1980) surveyed fifty countries to discover criteria that determine national cultural differences in work-related values. The interest of Hofestede's study is in the different ways that people perceive and interpret the world. The relevance of his study conducted in working settings is based on the assumption that

role patterns and value systems in a society are transferred from the school to the job, and to graduate school (Hofstede, 1986).

Half of the variance in the countries' mean scores can be explained by four basic cultural dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, and masculinity versus femininity. Hofstede's four cultural dimensions are defined here because in the present study three of these dimensions are used to make some assumptions about communication behavior in culturally diverse classrooms. The first dimension, power distance, is associated with the degree of centralization of authority and the extent of autocratic leadership, and the degree to which centralization and autocratic leadership are inherent in the mental programming of members of a society. There are many advantages in considering these cultural dimensions when one wants to understand the corporate environment in different countries. For instance, Ronen (1986) affirms that people in countries scoring higher in power distance prefer structures that resemble tall pyramids, with narrow span of control, a high percentage of supervisory personnel, and a large degree of centralization. Within organizations, the acceptance of unequal distribution of power is unquestionable. The maintenance of the system is based on the psychological need for dependence among people who do not have power (Hofstede, 1980). In fact, innequality exists within any society, but the degree to which it is tolerated by members of that society varies between one culture and another.

The second dimension, uncertainty avoidance, concerns the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations, and have created beliefs and institutions which try to avoid such uncertainties. It is related to the way a society deals with conflicts and aggression and, as the last resort, with life and death (Hofstede, 1983), and to the extent to which a society tends to consider itself threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations. People in those societies tend to avoid such situations by establishing greater career stability, formal rules, intolerance of deviant ideas or behaviors, and belief in absolute truth (Ronen, 1986)

Countries scoring high on uncertainty avoidance prefer structures characterized by high formalization, standardization, specialization, rigid hierarchical structuring of activities. In those

countries, anxiety is released through aggressiveness and emotions (Ronen, 1986). However, tolerance for people who have very different ideas is often present in countries that have low uncertainty avoidance. Ronen (1986) describes the organizational environment of high uncertainty avoidance countries as having lower labor turnover, more ritual behavior, managers less willing to make individual and risky decisions, less ambitious employees, more tolerance towards aggressive behavior of self and others, demonstration of emotions, and the assumption that conflict and competition can lead to aggression and should be avoided. Other important characteristics of high uncertainty avoidance countries are that deviant persons and ideas are dangerous, and younger people are suspicious. There is great concern with security in life, and there is a search for absolute truth and values.

The third dimension, individualism versus collectivism, relates to the degree of an individual's dependence on the group, and his or her self-concept as "I" or "we" (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). According to Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, and Chua (1988), the cultural dimensions of low-high context and individualism-collectivism are isomorphic. Therefore, all cultures that Hall (1976) mentions as low-context are individualistic, given Hofstede's scores, and all of the cultures Hall mentions as high-context are collectivistic in Hofstede's (1980) schema. In countries where collectivism predominates, people like to have a moral obligation to the group. As Cohen (1991) explains, communally-minded people are preoccupied about how they will impact others. Disapproval from other group members and loss of face before the group must be avoided. In contrast, in individualist societies, indirection in communication is not appreciated. Further, Cohen (1991) explains that people prefer to be direct and objective, to get things done, and to move on to another situation. Therefore, one doesn't need to spend time with social amenities (Cohen, 1991). In individualistic or low context cultures social relations are generally separated from the business context.

The last of Hofstede's dimensions, masculinity versus femininity, defines that in a masculine culture, a humanized job should lead to opportunities for recognition, advancement, and challenge, whereas in a feminine culture, the emphasis will be more on cooperation and a

good working atmosphere. Masculinity , is associated with clearly differentiated sex roles: men should dominate in society, machismo is appreciated.; men should be assertive, women should be nurturing (Hofstede, 1983). From a leadership perspective, individualism and power distance are the most important phenomena. In the USA, leadership theories presume that each individual seeks his or her own self-interest (Ronen, 1986).

The interest of Hofstede's survey is placed in fundamental differences in the ways people in different countries perceive and interpret the world. These dimensions are offered as a framework for developing hypotheses in cross-cultural organization studies. Index scores of the countries on the cultural dimensions correlate significantly with the outcomes of about 40 existing comparative studies (Hofstede, 1983).

Hansford (1992) affirms that research in the US and United Kingdom reveal that teachers frequently dominate classroom communication, that teacher questions tend to be narrow with a specific answer in mind, and that much of teacher classroom conversation is concerned with the controlling and directing students. Norton (1983) says that during classroom interaction, teachers and students may use communicator style profiles that utilize such styles as dominant, dramatic, contentious, animated, impression leaving, relaxed, attentive, open and friendly. Still, in countries where there is higher power distance, the wider distance between professors and students is expressed in different forms in such relationships. The psychological need for guidance among people who do not have power (students, in this case) and need more supervision is expected to cause different reactions in Brazilian and American students. Students coming from a higher power distance background tend to prefer a centralized degree of authority with the professor accepting an unequal relationship, whereas American students tend to do the opposite.

Hispanics and Latin Americans in general tend to express avoidance of interpersonal conflicts and competition because they place higher value on interpersonal relationships. As the literature review has shown, in countries scoring high on uncertainty avoidance people feel threatened by ambiguous situations. Significant education communication literature says that

teacher immediacy creates a positive affect . This happens because the teacher who is "immediate" creates a learning environment that is non-threatening and convertible. Therefore, because the students enjoy the environment they are more inclined to participate in instructional activities and messages (Collier & Powell,1990). This finding is particularly important for students coming from a high uncertainty avoidance country background. Collier and Powell also found that immediacy played a dominant role for Latino students. Immediacy is particularly important for Latino students early in the course. Thus, teacher support was described as appropriate and effective and linked to reducing uncertainty (Collier & Powell, 1990).

The literature in intercultural communication gives several examples of pattern behavior of individuals both in collectivist and individualistic societies. Collectivists value harmony within the ingroup, cooperation, loyalty to superiors, and security. By contrast, individualists are high in competition, autonomy and self-reliance. For instance, hispanics expect more positive behaviors in positive interpersonal situations, such as cooperation, than the Anglo Americans. Conformity with group leaders is frequently unquestioned among collectivists but is calculated among individualists.

Considering the educational context, Hofstede relates cultural dimensions to classroom context. In one of his works (Hofstede 1986) he addresses differences in student/student and teacher/student interaction in reference to cultural dissimilarities.

Under the four Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions, Brazil and the U.S. are classified as follows: Brazil and the majority of countries in Latin America scored strong in uncertainty avoidance and high in power distance. Brazil is also moderate in masculinity (Ronen, 1986) and can be considered a collectivistic society. Therefore, some peculiar characteristics are rapid decision making, little conscious planning, reliance on intuition, and emotional judgments (Ronen, 1986). The concepts of class and status are strong and influence many other aspects of Brazilian life. The Brazilian concept of privacy sometimes strikes Americans as contradictory and often as bewildering. Little privacy exists between family members and friends. There is a general

concern for the group rather than the individual (Harrison,1983). In contrast, the United States is high in individualism and action-orientation, with a high tolerance for risk and a low uncertainty avoidance dimension. The need for achievement is high, with stress on individual self-realization, leadership, and wealth as life goals. There is a lower score on power distance, the masculinity index is moderate, and there is an emphasis on planning (Ronen, 1986). Using an adaptation of Hofstede (1983, p. 52) Table 1, below, compares the four dimensions in the way they are shown for Brazil and the US with their respective index and rank among 50 countries and 3 regions.

Insert Table 1 about here

Hofstede's dimensions can be conceptually linked to other variables used in cross-cultural studies. In addition to the organizational environment, it is worthwhile to verify the applicability of these cultural dimensions in the multicultural classroom context in the United States. This is what this study intends to examine with the unit of analysis focused on both American and Brazilian graduate students and American instructors. Faculty expect all students to have certain skills when they reach graduate school. If instructors do not recognize these skills, they may make certain misjudgments about student's abilities. These judgments can lead to low expectations which, in turn, lead to low student performance, working as a self-fulfilling prophecy. A better way to match expectations with reality might lie in helping faculty and American graduate students (teaching assistants) to learn more about their own students and foreign peers. Therefore, the research question posed is how do those cultural values translate into classroom practice? How will these culture dimensions influence perceptions and behaviors when people from different cultures interact with professors and peers?

Based on the interferences that Hofstede's four cultural dimensions have caused in the organizational setting, this study focuses on cultural differences between Brazilian and American students in the educational setting. It is hypothesized that people from different cultural

backgrounds (in this case, Brazilians and Americans) will interact differently in a classroom environment regarding the three cultural dimensions examined. In accepting this assumption, it was expected that cultural background would influence the individual's style in classroom interaction, both in the relationship with peers and with instructors as well. Therefore, the dependent variable examined is classroom interaction, and cultural background is the independent variable. Two different levels will compound the independent variable: the relationship between student and professor and the relationship between student and other students.

Method

The research sample was formed by two subsamples: 15 graduate Brazilian students, and 15 US graduate students (N=30) attending Penn State University. Given the fact that these students have been in the US. for at least six months, and some of them have completed their Masters degree in the US., it is possible that they may have become somewhat acculturated to the American classroom environment, although no definitive statement can be made concerning the degree of acculturation. The names of the individuals forming the Brazilian sample were drawn from a list of membership in the Brazilian association on campus, "Friends of Brazil". All individuals in the Brazilian sample were graduate students, twelve of them are at the Ph.D. level, in different fields. They generally held or had held prior assistant professor positions in their native country, or were professionals with some years of experience already in critical technical fields considered of vital importance for the development of the country. All Ph.D. students in the sample were sponsored by the Brazilian government. Only three were students at the Master's degree level and therefore not sponsored by their governments. They held teaching assistantships at their departments at Penn State University.

The American participants in the sample were randomly selected from the departments of Speech Communication, Business, Policy Analysis, Engineering, and Spanish. A

questionnaire was given to each of them, containing instructions about the purpose of the study and the researcher's name and address for returning the form. The majority of them were teaching assistants from the Speech Communication field at Penn State.

Table 2 brings the sample composition for both groups, Brazilians and Americans, and their distribution by gender and major.

Insert Table 2 about here

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire in a sixteen-statement format. An example of the exact form is reproduced in Appendix 1. In an attempt to avoid the effects of acculturation while answering the questionnaire, Brazilian respondents were asked to think about the classroom system which existed in their native country. Subjects were asked to use a seven - point Likert scale where "1" corresponded to strongly disagree and "7" was at the end of the continuum for strongly agree with statements presented. The main topics (behaviors) covered by the instrument are represented in Table 3, which also demonstrates to which Hofstede's cultural dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and Individualism each of the sixteen statements is related.

Insert Table 3 about here

Items number 1, 2, 7, 11, 12, 13, and 15 were used to score Power Distance in both groups. Items number 8,10, 14, and 16, are intended to reflect uncertainty avoidance in both groups. Items number 3, 4, 5, and 9, measures the scores of both groups in the collectivism vs. individualism dimension.

Measurement/Procedures

The design used was a comparison between two independent groups: the Brazilians and the North American students. The study looked for differences in perceptions/behaviors in these two groups. After collecting and analyzing data, it was possible to compare and contrast the responses of American and Brazilian students, for questions related to three of Hofstede's cultural dimensions: power distance, individualist/collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance.

For all three cultural dimensions, the Pearson Correlation was used. For instance, the researcher correlated every item (i.e. questions for power distance) with the total score for that category (i.e. power distance), then, every question for uncertainty avoidance with the total score for the category total (i. e. uncertainty avoidance). Finally, every question on collectivism vs. individualism was correlated with the total score for collectivism vs. individualism. When the researcher found a correlation of less than .20 , the item was discarded. This procedure resulted in the elimination of some items from further analysis. For instance, item15 showed a negative correlation. Therefore, it was discarded from the power distance category, and item 9, also showing a negative correlation, was discarded from the individualism vs. collectivism category. Table 4 (I and II) illustrates the correlations for the three cultural dimensions. No item was discarded in the uncertainty avoidance category.

Insert Table 4-1 and 4-2 about here

Regarding procedures for testing, a parametric comparison of the two groups, t- test, for unmatched groups, was performed. Comparison between the two groups' means was therefore possible. Results of the t-test indicated that the American and Brazilian groups of students differed significantly only in the individualism-collectivism dimension. The t-value found for the category individualism-collectivism was $t= 4.67$, $df=28$, $p<.05$. The t-table brings a critical value of 2.048 for 28 degrees of freedom at the .05 probability level (two-tailed).

Discussion

The results contribute to intercultural communication theory and communication education theory. The study helps in providing cultural sensitivity and awareness to American educators and graduate teaching assistants regarding behaviors of their students from collectivistic or low context cultures. If not aware of such cultural differences in classroom interaction, faculty will have the same interactive expectations for all students even if they are teaching in culturally heterogenic classes. Also, if instructors do not recognize that their culturally different students may have different ways to demonstrate their skills, misjudgements about a student ability may occur. Consequently, such misjudgements can have negative effects on students. Misjudgements may lead to low expectations, low student performance, and false inferences about the student interest and participation in class.

Results of the t-test indicate that the means of these two groups, American and Brazilian graduate students, only differ significantly in the individualism-collectivism dimension. In this dimension, the t-value was significant at the critical level of $p < .05$. The mean of Americans was 19.33, and of the Brazilians, 25.33, with standard deviations of 4.22 and 2.63, respectively. The other two cultural dimensions, power distance and uncertainty avoidance, demonstrated differences that were not statistically significant. The differences related to the individualism-collectivism dimension seem related to most of the misperceptions among Brazilians and Americans involved in classroom interaction. It is important to note that some of the most common behaviors of Brazilians regarding classroom behavior are also common among other collectivist societies, especially those in Latin America. The collective orientation implies that students expect directive instructions from professors. Brazilian students expect to learn "how to do it", contrasting with Americans, who expect to "learn how to learn". Another point of divergence in interaction between these two groups is the amount of verbal expressions in class. In collectivist societies like Brazil, students will generally speak up only when they feel that they have significant contributions to make to the class or when they are called upon

individually, by the instructor. Referring back to Cohen (1991), collectivist-oriented people are always concerned about how they will impact on others. Disapproval from peers or other group members and face saving before the group are important to them. Therefore, their comments or remarks should be well-thought out before being presented to others. Collectivists will tend to speak up spontaneously only in small groups. By contrast, in individualist societies, students will feel comfortable in speaking up in large groups and in classrooms, responding to a general invitation and expectation of American instructors. This is positively interpreted as participation.

Another interesting characteristic of classroom interaction in collectivist societies is conflict avoidance between students and instructors. For Brazilians, confrontation in learning situations should be avoided in order to maintain harmony and save face for both student and instructor. By contrast, American students and instructors view confrontation in learning situations as a positive attitude. Confrontation is viewed as motivation for learning and participating in class. These differences are more difficult to observe in some schools than in others. However, the results in the collectivism-individualism dimension should make instructors and students aware of the behavioral differences they may encounter in cross-cultural interactions.

Given the divergence between what was expected and what was found, it is important to mention some of the limitations of the present study. They may diminish the ability to prove major differences in perceptions about classroom interaction between Brazilians and Americans in power distance and uncertainty avoidance dimensions used in this study. The first limitation is the small size of the sample. Fifteen subjects for each culture are not enough to draw conclusions about the general population of Brazilians. It would be very difficult to enlarge the sample working with Brazilian subjects at only one university campus. Also, it must be borne in mind that they are probably a self-selected group, in that they have chosen to come abroad and were also sponsored by their government because of academic achievements or experience. Furthermore, these Brazilians may not be a typical group because the majority of them are working towards Ph.D. degrees abroad. This is not so common at the graduate level in Brazil.

Replication of this study in other U.S. university campuses would bring further insights and probably enable further generalization of the results found here. In spite of its limitations, however, the study constitutes a step toward greater understanding of cross-cultural classroom interactions in American universities.

Table 1 : Index Values of Brazil and the United States collected among fifty countries and three regions on Hofstede's Four Cultural Dimensions

	Power Dist.	Uncert. Avoid.	Individualism	Masculin.
BRAZIL				
index	69	76	38	49
rank	39	29-30*	25	25
USA				
index	40	46	91	62
rank	16	11	50*	36

Note:

1 : The data in this table are part of a 50 country table in "National Cultures in Four Dimensions" by G. Hofstede, 1983, International Studies of Management and Organization ,13(2) , *p.52.*

: 2: A rank of 50 indicates that the U.S. participants scored highest in this dimension among 50 nations represented.

: 3: Index - indicates the position of each of the 50 countries relative to the four culture dimensions

: 4: The rank "29-30" is shared with Venezuela. Hence, neither can be declared 29 or 30.

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Table 2 **Gender and Major of Participants**

Sample Composition: N=30 (15 Brazilian Grad. + 15 Amer. Grad.)

Brazilians	Gender	Major
	4 m	Engineering
	3 f	Engineering
	1 m	Math
	2 f	Speech Comm.
	2 f	Psychology
	1 m	Business
	2 f	Education

Americans:	Gender	Major
	7 f	Speech Commun.
	3 f	Business
	1 f	Policy Analysis
	1 m	Engineering
	1 m	Spanish
	1 f	Spanish
	1 m	Speech Commun.

Table 3 **Items examined in the questionnaire**

Use of Likert Scale: 1...Strongly Disagree.....7....Strongly Agree

N/A option could be marked if the experiences of the respondent doesn't match with the statements.

1) Persuasiveness from students towards the professor = power distance

2) Concordance or discordance with professor's point of view: challenge = Power distance

3) Willingness to share class notes. = Collectivism vs. Individualism

4) Willingness to discuss class-related issues with classmates = collectivism vs. individualism

5) Reasonable to ask help from classmates with school-related matters. = Individualism vs. collectivism

6) Cooperation rather than competition is the rule = Individualism vs. collectivism

7) Perceive professors using authoritarian role = Power distance

8) Professor distributes turns in order to allow students to speak = Uncertainty avoidance

9) Need to compete: success in school means success in job hunting = Individualism vs. Collectivism

10) In addition to knowledge in the field, prefer instructors who show support and empathy. = Uncertainty Avoidance

11) Feel more comfortable with instructors who display immediacy behaviors = P. Dist. (high power distance students want to feel at ease and need it).

12) Feel more comfortable when professor shows immediacy earlier than later = Power Distance

13) Instructors expect students to raise questions and challenge them = Power distance

14) Competence remaining constant, preference is for older professor = Uncertainty avoidance

15) Instructor must always be in complete control of the classroom = Power distance

16) Instructors are closer to the truth than students = uncertainty avoidance

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Table 4-1 Correlation for the 3 Dimensions examined: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Individualism/Collectivism (N=30) Table 4-1

Power Distance Question #	Correlation	Unc. Avoid. Question #	Correlat.
Q1	.5958**	Q8	.4329*
Q2	2705	Q10	.2071
Q7	6274**	Q14	.6596**
Q11	.5630**	Q16	.4595*
Q12	.4910**		
Q13	2730		
Q15	-.0151		

* $p < .05$, two-tailed ** $p < .01$, two-tailed

Correlation for 3 Dimensions (N=30) Table 4-2

Individualism/ Collect. Question #	Correlat.
Q3	.8218**
Q4	.7006**
Q5	.7144**
Q6	.6391**
Q9	-.1270

* $p < .05$, two-tailed. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed

Appendix 1

Questionnaire Interview

Cultural background and classroom interaction: perceptions from American and Brazilian students.

In a scale from 1 to 7, circle the number that best indicates your feelings.

N/A should be used when the respondent believes that a particular statement is non-applicable to his or her experiences.

1 - If my test grades are lower than expected, I feel free to challenge my professor to raise my grade.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

2 - If I disagree with my professor's point of view, I will tell him/her or I will challenge his/her response.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

3 - I should always be willing to share class notes or other information with classmates.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

4 - It is always reasonable to address class-related questions to fellow students.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

5 - It is always reasonable to ask help of fellow students with school-related matters.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

6 - Cooperation rather than competition is the rule in my usual class environment in my country.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

7 - I perceive professors in my native country exerting an authoritarian role.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/
8 - In my country, to speak or answer questions in class, it is necessary that the professor signal that it is my turn.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

9 - I need to compete with other students because success in school means success in job hunting.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

10 - Besides knowledge in the field, I prefer professors who show support and empathy (verbally or nonverbal).
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

11 - I feel more comfortable when professors display immediacy behaviors (eye contact, smiling, physical proximity, and relaxed body posture).
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

12 - I feel more comfortable when professors show immediacy earlier rather than later in the course.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

13 - In my country, instructors normally expect students to raise questions and challenge what they have said.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

14 - If competence in the subject matter remains constant between two instructors, I would prefer to have an older instructor rather than a younger one.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

15 - The instructor must always be in complete control of the classroom.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

16 - Instructors are closer to the truth than students are.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree N/A

Please, mark if you are an American ( ) or a Brazilian student ( ).

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